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LETTER DATED 16 DECEMBER 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, on orders from my Government, to request you to convene the Security Council in order to discuss recent events which have once again plunged the Democratic Republic of the Congo into mourning and threaten peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. In this regard, I request the Security Council to consider the possibility of setting up a commission entrusted with the task of investigating the massacres in Mundende (Rwanda), Masisi and Rutshuru.

According to information that we received from the refugee camp in Mundende, the unspeakable attack that took place on the night of 10 to 11 December 1997 caused more than 1,643 deaths, the serious wounding of 237 persons and the disappearance of more than 1,150 persons. Various accounts provided by witnesses in this regard indicate that the attackers were apparently for the most part elements of the former Rwandan armed forces and the Interahamwe armed militias. Most of the victims are Congolese who had been driven out of the region of Masisi and from Rutshuru by death squads. These are the same armed elements that were behind the recent attack against the Congolese village of Bukavu.

At a time when the United Nations commission investigating alleged massacres of Rwandan refugees is on site in Congolese territory, my Government is filled with indignation at the silence on the part of the international community in the face of these further massacres.

My Government, moreover, points out that the international community is, in actual fact, investigating individuals who claim to be refugees during the day, but who become real fighters at night and do not hesitate to commit the most heinous crimes against the Congolese population. These perpetrators of genocide are already guilty of the massacre of 147 innocent victims in Mundende last August, which did not in any way move the international community.

As a result of this, the situation which currently prevails in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is becoming rather tense. Proof of this is the

discontent among the people living in Mbandaka and Wendji, who have been demonstrating against the perception that the United Nations is coming to protect the perpetrators of the genocide, who created the insecurity in their area and who have no compunction whatsoever about murdering their Congolese countrymen in cold blood.

My Government, which has already expressed to the Security Council its firm intention not to avoid any sacrifice in order to ensure that its people live in peace, tranquillity and security, considers, nevertheless, that the insurrectionary situation which is being created in Equateur province because of the United Nations will be difficult to control and may even turn against the Government and that, because of this, it would be the task of the Congolese Government to take all appropriate and necessary measures to restore peace and harmony in the province in respect for the will of the people who inhabit it.

In order to prevent any destabilization that might occur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of activities by elements of the former Rwandan armed forces and the Interahamwe armed militias, my Government calls upon the Security Council to assume fully its responsibilities and establish a favourable atmosphere for restoring security and tolerance in the Great Lakes region.

I ask the Security Council to consider the request by the Government of the Republic of the Congo concerning the establishment of a commission to investigate the massacres in Mundende, Masisi and Rutshuru.

I should be most grateful if you would have this letter issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) André M. KAPANGA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative